

Morgan, F.:

Witchcraft in Connecticut

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BY
DR. GEORGE F. BLACK

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for internal trade, but said that New York would still be a purely trading city; a contingency which cannot arise until the United States not only manufactures all that it requires, which is probable, but that we will consume our surplus product, mineral and agricultural, which does not now seem at all possible—unless, perhaps, the rest of Europe intends to migrate to America. Indeed, the demand from abroad for not only our agricultural, but our manufactured product, seems to increase as fast as our ability to supply it. This distinguished gentleman, who was a true New Yorker, although of New Hampshire birth and New England training, closes his most interesting and philosophic study with the following words: “There is no mention on record, ancient or modern, of so rapid a growth as the city has had since its liberation from the embarrassments of colonial servitude, and it is confidently to be believed that its growth will continue undiminished until it transcends the bounds of every commercial city in Europe.” This is already true if the comparison be made between our condition to-day and the condition at the time he writes of. The relative conditions, however, have changed since his declaration was made. All over Europe there is a growing trend of population to the great cities; the wonderful growths of Berlin and Hamburg in the last ten years are notable instances of a sudden rise in population, while those of London and Vienna have moved in more regular but still startling progression.

WITCHCRAFT IN CONNECTICUT.

BY FORREST MORGAN.

THAT there are materials for such a chapter is simply restating the fact that the settlers were seventeenth century English. That the materials are so scanty, relative to those for England at the same period, evinces that the New Englanders were much superior to the mass of English. That their being products of their time, with the same stock of information and beliefs and the same practical inferences from both, should be matter of denunciation or pharisaical sarcasm, is discreditable to human rationality. With equal justice might we revile the society of the fourteenth century for eating with their fingers or believing in the divinity of the Holy Roman Empire. All that could be asked, and more than could be hoped, would be superior readiness to make social outcome the test of religious theory; and such they had. They would be entitled to lenient judgment had they been something less ready in place of more; for while all Christians accepted the Bible as it stood, their own society was built up on the Bible—on its fervent acceptance, its studious interpretation, its upholding against tradition or custom or authority the attempt to bring their social life into general accordance with its precepts. As teaching and as literature it filled their lives; for many years they literally had nothing else. It is creditable to their common sense that they fell into so little barbarity or absurdity in attempting to apply obsolete systems of thought and practice to their own lives.

Regarding their action, it is to be observed that as in

other communities, the extirpation of witchcraft confined itself mainly to local nuisances or suspects, Ishmaelites, or independent thinkers,—those out of favor with the respectability or inertia of the community; in short, when members of the latter were involved, though the theory was not for the moment discredited, the evidence began to be scrutinized with great care, and the canons made so severe that practical results failed. This must never be forgotten in discussing the intellectual status of communities. They made witch-hunting a branch of their social police and of their desire for social solidarity. That this was wrong and mischievous is granted; but it is ordinary human conduct now as then. It was a most illogical, capricious, and dangerous form of enforcing punishment, abating nuisances, and shutting out disagreeable truths; fertile in injustice, oppression, the shedding of innocent blood, and the extinguishing of light. No one can justify it, or plead beneficial results from it which could not have been secured with far less evil in other ways. But it was natural that, believing the crime to exist, they should use the belief to strike down offenders or anonyms out of reach of any other *legal* means. They did not invent the crime for the purpose, nor did they invent the death penalty for this crime. We impute a cruelty to them which has no basis, because we shrink from the infliction of the death penalty as that age did it. They saw no more cruelty in putting this particular sort of criminal to death than any other.

One other general remark is called out by the non-recognition of it in most writing on witchcraft. The skeptics—who were never such as to the abstract existence of witchcraft, but only as to its existence in their own community, or the adequacy of the explanation in individual cases—formed but a small part of the whole body of suspects. The majority were as firm believers in the black art as their accusers; they believed that though personally innocent, they were surrounded with those not so, that very

likely those indicted as accomplices had really committed sorcery, and not only so, but the actual piece of sorcery charged. That this had been in fact committed, they no more thought of doubting than a man wrongfully accused of murder doubts that the murder has taken place. Not to admit this is to suppose that the social riffraff had an invariable monopoly of advanced intelligence and clarity of mind. There is nothing to justify such an idea; yet it is tacitly assumed that the alleged witches and wizards in all cases were the only ones in the community free from the delusion, and were not merely protesting against the sacrifice of their own lives unjustly, but against what they believed to be in its own nature falsehood and perjury. If we disabuse ourselves of this notion, and remember that they probably thought merely that suspicion for a real crime had fallen on the wrong person, we shall understand better how they could confess in their crazed anguish to the commission of the crimes of which they had heard all their lives, and could involve others in the same doom.

The number of lives taken for this cause in colonial Connecticut seems to have been nine, all in the years 1647-62; but the 1647 case is dubious, and the number may not be above eight. After 1662 no more blood was shed here on this ground; some reasons are suggested later. In the exact half-century (1647-97) between the first indictment and the last, allowing the doubtful case, twenty-eight persons in all were accused of the crime before the courts of Connecticut and New Haven colonies,—seven of them, or one-fourth, in a single “flurry,” that of 1662; three were in New Haven, 1653-7. Three other convictions of guilty were found besides those followed by executions; but as the courts either set aside the verdicts or released the convicted, they belong to the credit side. Communities are judged by the final action of their superior elements, not by the intentions of their lower. New Haven apparently escaped all share of the bloodshed by having judge instead

of jury trial—there was no difference in belief or law, and certainly no superior personal humanity, witness the much harsher treatment of the Quakers,—and that judge the governor, Theophilus Eaton, a gentleman of exemplary sense and moderation. Men of superior station were not always exempt from the frenzy of the mass,—witness the Salem craze; but in general their experience would undermine the bigoted self-confidence of the more ignorant, and their station exempted them from either annoyance or ridicule by the social pariahs, of whose dread the lesser goodmen and goodies rid themselves by sending them to the gallows. We shall see reason to surmise that this acted on the Connecticut as well as the New Haven magistrates.

The foundation of the witchcraft laws was the Mosaic code, on which the Puritan colonies based their catalogue of capital crimes; both New Haven and Connecticut make the same citations, Ex. xxii:18, Lev. xx:27, and Deut. xviii:10, as authority. The first, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,” was evidently regarded as binding as any other commandment; why not the second, commanding the witch to be stoned to death, is one of the distinctions drawn by every age in theological matters as related to practice, for the meditation of the outsider. But as their legislation was not to conflict with the English, there was a more direct precedent in the British statute of 1603, passed immediately after the accession of James I., and as a graceful compliment to his ‘Demonology.’ The Connecticut law of 1642 reads, “If any Man or Woman be a Witch, that is hath or consulteth with a Familiar Spirritt, they shall bee put to Death.” The New Haven statute of 1655 is, “If any person be a Witch, he or she shall be put to death, according to” the list of Scripture texts above.

The first capital case in Connecticut is always assigned to (March) 1646-7, on the clear statement of Winthrop’s Journal of that year: “A Person of Windsor was put to Death on the Charge of Witchcraft at Hartford.” This is,

however, a very perplexing matter. There is no entry of any such case on the records of the Hartford particular court, where all the witchcraft cases for the neighboring towns were tried, and where every other case is set down, nor in the local annals of Windsor or Hartford, though as the first case it must have been a great sensation in those little towns, and the next one was carefully written up. Nor is it at all certain that the entry was made at that time: it is in a large blank space at the end of the year 1646, and may have been later information written in and misdated, especially as Winthrop seems not to have been told the victim's sex. On the other hand, he did not invent it outright, and if a mistake it must be a confusion with some one else; but it can in that case be no one but Mary Johnson following; and to suppose that on hearing of the execution of a witch from Wethersfield a few weeks before his death (and there is a good probability she was not executed till long after it), he turned back the leaves of his diary and mis-copied it into a place two years earlier as one from Windsor, is so extraordinary an improbability that it would seem much easier to believe that the records are wrong. Yet though this seems a simple explanation, it is in this case so difficult to support that we are left in a blind alley. Local records may yet turn up and throw light on this case.

The first certain execution was that of Mary Johnson ("Jonson") of Wethersfield, at Hartford, in 1649 or 1650. On December 7, 1648, a "Bill of Indictment" was framed against her, "that by her owne Confession, shee is guilty of Familiarity with the Deuill." She appears to have been an unchaste and light-fingered servant-girl, who two years before had been whipped for "Theuery" (if it was the same Mary Johnson). Whom she had bewitched, or how, we have no statement (all we know is from Mather's "Mag-nalia"); but finding she was to be hanged in any event, she furnished a very satisfactory "confession," which if the "Deuill" is omitted is probable enough. She was discon-

tented with her work, and perpetually wishing the Devil to take certain things, especially disagreeable household duties; one was cleaning out the ashes, and many thousands in the time of the great old-fashioned fireplace have probably echoed her aspiration. Satan obligingly complied with her wish, and on one occasion drove the hogs out of the yard when they had broken in. She also confessed that she had "committed uncleanness both with men and with Devils," and murdered a child (quite likely her own). She was said to be "very Penitent." Servant-girls were more plentiful then than now, or the community would not have spared her, even for the luxury of an *auto-da-fe*. She was probably not hanged till the spring of 1650.

The petition of Uncas to the united colonies of New England, in the winter of 1649-50, to protect him from the sorceries of other Indians, is hardly relevant to our subject. Connecticut was asked to appoint a committee to look into it, but seems not to have acted; and would have had a diverting time examining Indian deponents and passing sentence on Indian culprits, *in re* the question what was normal and what was abnormal in an Indian.

On February 20, 1650-1, an indictment was found against a Wethersfield carpenter named John Carrington, and his wife "Joane," in common form, for having "Intertained ffamiliarity with Sathan, the Great Enemye of God and Mankinde," and accomplished wonderful works past human power by his aid. We note again that though convicted they were not hanged till March 19, 1653. These long imprisonments suggest that the Connecticut magistrates were trying to do indirectly what the New Haven ones could do directly, and release the prisoners after public excitement had cooled down. Unfortunately they had not the same power. There is a reasonable possibility that they would have escaped, however, but for the Bassett and Knapp cases, all four being hanged together in 1653, in a sudden exacerbation of feeling.

The next two cases seem to have been closely connected. The connection should be emphasized, because neglect of it has been made the basis of some virulent detraction of an important man. The earlier was of Goodwife Bassett, at Stafford, in 1651; the later of Goodwife Knapp, at Fairfield, in 1653. These two towns had a particular court in common, with joint magistrates sitting alternately in the two; that of Fairfield was its founder, Roger Ludlow, one of the leading founders of Connecticut. All we know of Goody Bassett is that Governor Haynes and two magistrates went down to "keepe Courte uppon her Tryall for her Life," after May 15, 1651. She was hanged; we cannot tell when, perhaps not till 1653. One of the efforts of the prosecutors and promoters of the prosecution at each trial was to have the witch name her fellow-witches, so that all might be rooted out; and the frantic victims, out of mental break-down, or honest belief in the crime having been committed, or vengefulness or mischief, would often involve others, so that it is remarkable this ninepin system had not brought on a holocaust of murders long before the Salem times. It would seem that Goody Bassett had hinted at some one in Fairfield, without giving names, and suspicion vacillated between Goody Knapp and the young wife of one Thomas Staplies; at last it fixed on the former, who was tried, convicted, and hanged—almost certainly early in 1653. Her case is the most painful in the entire Connecticut list, for she impresses one as the best woman:—how the just and high-minded old lady had excited hate or suspicion, we cannot know.

The loss of the court record (carried off by Ludlow) deprives us of any direct account of her indictment; the whole matter was brought out in a libel suit which followed. While Mrs. Knapp was in prison she was beset as usual, by the gossips of the town, to name her accomplices. They were especially insistent with her to name Mrs. Staplies; their unscrupulous pertinacity, according to

Staplies had laid herself under suspicion of being a witch by her skepticism of Mrs. Knapp being one. They professed to think the story mere malice on Mrs. Knapp's part (they did not know her), and accused Ludlow of trying to spread gossip; a rather impudent charge, as it was they and not he who circulated the gossip that might bring to the gallows the very woman they professed to be defending. They stated in excuse that Ludlow told them Mrs. Knapp had been overheard, and he was afraid others would spread it; but then they might not, and it was obvious Ludlow did not intend to. In fact, he said nothing worse than that she was a foolish woman for bringing suspicion on herself—in which her best friends might concur, though we respect her sense and outspokenness. She seems from the record to have been an inquisitive and long-tongued but good-hearted and rational woman, with a sense of humor her towns-women sadly lacked, and which helps to account for their acrid hostility to her. It is not safe to laugh at people who can hang you. But the danger was too great for quiescence; and her husband brought suit for defamation—not against the Davenports, who had circulated the defamation, but against Ludlow, who had kept the worst part of it quiet. The counts were three,—the statement of the confession, statements as to her incredulity of Goody Knappe being a witch, and calling her a liar.

Ludlow had for some weeks been preparing to leave America for good (he spent his last years in Holyhead, Wales); had his ship engaged, and must have received the process but a few days before he went; he therefore left funds with his attorney, Ensign Alexander Bryan of Milford (New Haven Colony), to satisfy any judgment, with directions to collect evidence and defend the case. Bryan collected an overwhelming mass to show that Ludlow only told matter of universal notoriety; then he went into court with it May 29—but curiously, this suit of one Connecticut citizen against another was not brought in the Fairfield court, but

before the New Haven general court, which had no jurisdiction over Fairfield and would not have been allowed to meddle of its own motion. The only explanation yet attempted is worse than worthless, being a false statement—that Ludlow was a “refugee” in New Haven. I can suggest but one explanation: that Ludlow, having expressly or virtually resigned his Connecticut citizenship, was a citizen of nowhere but England in general when the process was served; that there was therefore free choice of jurisdiction between the parties, and that the two agreed on New Haven as being fairer for the plaintiff than the Fairfield particular court, of which Ludlow had just left the judgeship, or the Hartford, Ludlow having been so prominent a magistrate. In a word, it was chosen as the basis of an umpire. That court, however, took the question to be not whether Ludlow told the truth, but whether Mrs. Staples had been brought into unfair danger; and on the latter ground fined Ludlow in absence £10 for defamation on the first two counts, besides £5 for costs of court, and the next term fined him another £10 for accusing her of lying, which was not related to the Davenport story.

Part of the testimony brought out, in addition to what has been stated, throws an interesting light on the public state of mind. It seems Mrs. Staples made an opportunity to strip and examine the old woman’s body after her execution, to look for the “witch-teats,” which were one pretext for such killings, and by which the Devil was supposed to suck his familiars. Having done so, she contemptuously told the others there were no teats other than she herself or any other woman had, and if those were witch-marks she was one herself; and that if the accusing gossips would search their persons they would find the same—a remark which greatly incensed her auditors. The highly feminine reply of one woman, that it made no difference,—she had teats anyway, and confessed she was a witch,—would be delicious if it were not so grim a specimen of the reasoning on which a human life could hang in those days.

This recital shows the gross unfairness of the charges brought against Ludlow in connection with the case. There is no evidence that he bore any part in fastening the charge on Mrs. Knapp; it was the crowd of female gossips around Goody Bassett who must have done that. Nor is there any that he was trying to punish Mrs. Staples for skepticism over the case; his all-powerful word would have haled her to the same court and quite likely the same gallows as Goody Knapp, but he withheld it, and it was her alleged friends who came near doing her that service instead. We do not even know that his quarrel with her was related to the Knapp case. There is equally little basis for the assumption that the New Haven court was acting out of spite to Ludlow; he must have chosen or agreed to that court himself, and it distinctly stated that it refrained from severe judgment in his absence.

Five persons, and perhaps six, had lost their lives for witchcraft in six years at most, and it may be four of them close together. Possibly people began to have a revulsion of feeling at the deaths coming so quickly, and to scan the evidence more closely. At any rate, no further executions took place for nine years; then there was a frenzy of suspicion and several deaths, the last known in Connecticut. Meantime there are cases which show that common sense was not wholly dead, and whose grotesqueness we can freely enjoy.

In 1653, immediately after the Knapp-Staples affairs—and very likely as part of the same ferment,—an old woman named Elizabeth Godman, then living in the family of Deputy-Governor Stephen Goodyear of New Haven, was currently charged with being a witch. She was a peppery person with an active tongue, and aggressive in her self-defenses; the other women hated and dreaded her; she muttered a good deal to herself, and she was much too ready with rational explanations of the evil eye and other sorceries. Moreover, she told Rev. Mr. Hooke, teacher of

the church and afterward Cromwell's chaplain, that witches should be converted instead of provoked. That gentleman thereafter lent ear to the most extraordinary mass of rubbish concerning her actions, to which in due time he deposed in court. Finally the wife of the colonial treasurer, Joshua Atwater, was much disturbed at Mrs. Godman's supernatural scent for some figs in her pocket; and when a neighbor's girl, after watching her "cutt a sopp" at Mrs. Atwater's house, had chills and fever and laid it to Mrs. Godman's sorceries, the latter was forbidden the Atwater house. Mrs. Godman saw the bolt coming, and with admirable nerve summoned Mrs. Atwater, Hooke and his wife, the Goodyears, the wife of Bishop (the colonial secretary), and others, to answer for having hinted at her being a witch. The case was first heard May 21, 1653, but continued many weeks with hearings and depositions, new discoveries of her sorceries, and (more alarming still) her jeers at the witchcraft solution of all sorts of personal and social evils. She had suggested that Hooke's sick boy had done too much sliding, and accounted for the fits and stillbirths of a Goodyear bride (whose husband she was suspected of wanting herself, old as she was) by heredity. Two girls had "peeked" at her in bed and seen the Devil there, they were sure, but had been scared away by the old woman before they had a good look at him; and one of them had the ague some days after. Goody Thorpe had a chicken die and others "drope" after refusing to sell them to Mrs. Godman. Finally, on August 4, the court gave judgment that the defendants had a right to suspect her, and that she was reputed a great liar; that she must not go about to other houses "in a rayling manner," as heretofore, but "keepe her place and medle with her own business," otherwise she would come before them again and all this evidence would count. Unluckily, she did not heed this admonition, and two years later she was up again. She certainly had the art of making herself well

hated, and New Haven felt that it had too much of her. Mr. Goodyear had turned her out, the prayer-meeting had barred her out, and the neighbors had had deplorable experiences with their products and animals, all laid on her head. She was sent to prison in August, to be capitally tried in October; her health being bad, however, she was released with a warning in September. Then there was more unaccountable work of the Evil One, Mr. Hooke being the chief sufferer; it seems fortunate this person was in New Haven and not Connecticut, or Salem might have been outdone in the tale of slaughter. The court in October decided, however, that though she was "full of lying," and it was a pretty clear case so far as suspicion went, there was not evidence enough yet to put her to death, and she was let off with the old warning not to go about making enemies for herself. She gave £50 security for good behaviour, and disappears till her death in 1660.

Just before her second committal, on July 3, 1655, Nicholas Bayly and his wife were apprehended on suspicion, but were told that they would not be proceeded against just now; after several examinations they were advised to leave the colony on account of the wife's "lying malice and filthy speeches," she acting as if "possessed with the verrey Devill."

In 1657 New Haven had another equally plain case. This was a charge by Thomas Moulénor that William Meaker had bewitched his pigs, several of which had sickened and died; he discovered Meaker's agency by putting first the severed tail and ear of a sick pig into the fire, and then the remainder "till it was dead." Meaker brought suit for defamation; it is significant of the confidence felt in the justice and moderation of the magistrates, that in New Haven the accused took the aggressive. Moulénor was a "tough subject," drunken, quarrelsome, litigious, and insubordinate; he had been under £100 bonds for good behaviour the last twelve years, and the court called his attention to this

and informed him that the colony would be better off without than with him. He withdrew his charge.

In 1657-8 a case came to Connecticut from beyond its recent Long Island possessions—at Easthampton, where Lion Gardener lived. One of his servants accused another, Goodwife Garlicke, of killing her baby by sorcery; Gardener testified that the accuser had taken an Indian baby to nurse, and to gain the money had let her own baby starve. The magistrates, however, seem to have been rather proud of their first sorcery case, and felt it incumbent on them to treat demonology with more respect; and not being competent judges, deputed two men to take Mrs. Garlicke to "Keniticut," deliver her up to the authorities for trial, and ask to have Easthampton annexed to Connecticut. The May term, 1658, acquitted her, and sent her back with a letter from Governor Winthrop to the town, admonishing them to treat Joseph Garlicke and his wife "neighbourly and peaceably," if they expected like treatment from them. Nevertheless, by some abstruse reasoning, they made her husband pay the cost of her transportation and lodging.

From 1659 to 1663 Saybrook took its turn, but there is little to learn about the case. In the former year Samuel Wyllys and John Mason were deputed to go there and examine the "suspitions about witchery;" but no further record appears till September 5, 1661, when Nicholas and Margaret Jennings were indicted for "having caused the death of several." This is much the worst indictment drawn against any Connecticut witches, and would naturally have given them short shrift; especially if (as pretty certain) they are the "Nicholas Gennings" and "Margaret Poore, alias Bedforde," who were brought before the New Haven general court in 1643 as runaway servants, guilty of lewdness, theft, and other misdemeanors, and were sentenced to be whipped and married. But perhaps the very atrocity of the charge made the jury skeptical; anyway, on

October 9 it disagreed. The case would seem to have been sharply debated outside the record; for on March 11, 1663 the Connecticut general court disallowed the Saybrook constables' charges for witnesses in the case, and announced that they would pay no such charges in the future.

The cases of 1662 were Connecticut's nearest approach to the Salem cases of thirty years later, and originated in much the same fashion: here were two different and possibly unconnected cases of hysterical suggestion, but no falling on ground quite so well prepared, nor stimulated by such encouragements to falsehood, so that it did not approach the magnitude of that terrible devastation. Several persons were indicted, of whom two were certainly executed and probably a third. The fire and tow respectively were nervous people fed upon tales of witchcraft and knowledge of the executions for it at their own doors, and social pariahs a subject of mingled dislike and apprehension to their neighbors. It began with the eight-year-old girl of John Kelly, who in the delirium of sickness, in the spring of 1662, cried out against Mrs. William Ayres (whom she had of course been taught to shun) for afflicting her as she died, and an autopsy was held to see if her interior gave any token of illegitimate causes. Goody Ayres foreboded it as a death-warrant (which was made extra ground of suspicion), and, effecting her escape, fled with her husband, leaving behind a son, who was apprehended by the general court. It is probable that the water ordeal had previously been tried on them—tying hand and foot and throwing them in to swim; it certainly had on one couple. Increase Mather says that a bystander (who had the instincts of a man of science) asserted that floating was no proof, because anyone would float in that condition; and offered himself for an experiment, but sank when thrown in. In the flurry of suspicion, others were apprehended also; among them Judith, wife of Caspar Varleth and sister-in-law of Peter Stuyvesant, who wrote a letter in her

favor and probably secured her release, and one James Walkley, who fled to Rhode Island. On June 13, Mary, the wife of Andrew Sanford, was indicted after the usual formula, for having done acts and learned secrets beyond the ordinary course of nature by Satan's help. She was convicted, but nothing more is known of her.

The next step in the tragedy is very like the Salem performances also. Ann Cole was a religious melancholiac, tormented with doubts about her religious welfare; and in 1662 began to take fits in which she maundered for some hours about a company of evil spirits taking counsel how to ruin her (with supernatural witlessness, in the hearing of their victim), and concluding to "confound her language that she may tell no more tales." They did it so clumsily that she merely talked in a Dutch brogue; she was not intimate with the only Dutch family there, and her hearers (she always had her fits before hearers) were convinced that only supernatural means could have given her so good a Dutch accent. The fits were contagious, and she and two other women had them in church several times, doubtless without consciousness that they were the most interesting objects there. A special day of prayer was held for them, and they rose to the occasion so vigorously that one of the company fainted at the sight; and Ann Cole denounced Elizabeth, wife of Richard Seager, as a witch. Mrs. Seager characterized it as "hodge-podge," as no doubt it was; but barely escaped with her life, being indicted three times,—January 6, 1662-3, July 2, 1663, (accused of witchcraft, adultery, and blasphemy, but convicted only of adultery), and July 16, 1665. The last time she was found guilty and lodged in prison, but after about a year was released (May 18, 1666), and removed to the Alsatia of the oppressed, Rhode Island. As the victims were unjustly accused, we praise the government which sheltered them; but as they were usually undesirable citizens of their old residence, the false charge hardly made them desirable acquisitions to the new one.

Among the other disesteemed citizens of Hartford at this time were Nathaniel Greensmith and his wife Rebecca, of whom he was the third husband. He was a well-to-do farmer, every now and then convicted of petty thievery, assault and battery, or lying. She is described by Rev. John Whiting as a "lewd, ignorant, and considerably aged woman," with two daughters by her first marriage. Almost every country town has such families (granting the accuracy of the details),—low-caste, of bad example, a thorn in the side of the respectable inhabitants, and of whom no one is quite sure what they will do some time. The interesting feature of the witchcraft cases is, that so often these parties have accumulated considerable property. Greensmith's estate inventoried about £182, equal in relative rank to fully \$5,000 now, and that in a country town. From his wife's "confession," one may suspect that there were local doubts of its being all honestly acquired. The Greensmiths lived next door to the Coles, the first lot on the present Wethersfield Avenue. As a result of these various examinations and suggestions, Rebecca was arrested and lodged in prison. She had probably the repute of a witch already as her husband at that very time had an action pending against William Ayres for slandering her, most likely with charges of sorcery, perhaps to relieve his own wife. The result is one of those surprising things we frequently meet in these cases, and which justified the witch-hunters to themselves and every one else then, and makes it hard to blame them now. How should they doubt the truth when the accused themselves owned to it all, and more? Mrs. Greensmith not only confessed everything charged against her, but invented a luxuriant confession of all sorts of things derived from the stock witch-tales on which she had been fed; and every time a new person asked her questions, she had a fresh confession ready to oblige them. Why?—why can tell? Probably her weak old brain was full of delusions, and had given way under the strain. She said that she

ad resolved at first to deny it all, but it was as though the flesh were pulled off her bones, and she must tell the truth. That the questioners asked if the Devil had had sexual intercourse with her, and she admitted that he frequently had, are matters of course. Perhaps Rev. Mr. Whiting's charge that she was "lewd" means only this, as the "considerably aged" wife of a prosperous third husband should have the presumption of decent conduct.

On December 30, 1662, the Hartford particular court indicted the couple for familiarity with Satan and its usual results. The husband refused to make a confession, but his wife reconfessed enough for both, her statement probably shot with threads of irrelevant but fatally confirmatory truth. On January 8, 1662-3, she fairly outdid herself. The first item of the confession was probably true: "My husband . . . told me that now thou hast confest against thyself, let me alone and say nothing of me and I will be good unto thy children." This reasonable request was thrown away; contrary to the kindly and honorable Goody Knapp, she accused everybody within reach, her husband first of all, and, mainly following the beaten track of local suspicions, Goodies Seager, Sanford, and Ayres, James Walkley, and Judith Varleth. These others were either out of reach or the court discredited the charge; but her husband and herself were found guilty and shortly executed. Ann Cole at once recovered, and ten years later married a widower with eight children (Andrew Benton), who a couple of years before had bought Greensmith's confiscated estate, where she spent the remainder of her days. Her nerves must have recovered to an enviable equipose, for it would seem she might have preferred some other residence; but sentiment was not morbidly insistent in those times, especially with a *passe* spinster who had an offer of marriage.

Two days before the last confession of Goody Greensmith, Mary Barnes of Farmington was indicted for witch-

craft and found guilty by the jury. What relation, if any, her case had to the Greensmith's, is not known, but probably it was part of the same outbreak. The only further note of her fate is a bill for "keep" in prison; and as this was for about the same length of time as the Greensmiths', she was probably executed like them.

Connecticut's debauch was over for many years. What produced the change, is matter of inference. Probably the very extent and fury of the craze, as with the Salem cases, showed the community the possible abyss under its feet, and bred secret doubts. Its close, too, is nicely coincident with the new charter, the absorption of New Haven, and the expansion of the horizon due to this great enlargement of political interests, with the overturn in New York. Nor is it altogether unlikely that the new spirit introduced by the restoration, the violent reaction against Puritanism in the old country, gave courage to the more liberal element in the new to hold up its heads. Something certainly strengthened the hands of the Connecticut magistrates.

In May, 1669, occurred the most remarkable case in the colony in one respect. One of the richest persons in Wethersfield was indicted for witchcraft: Catherine Harrison, widow of a former town surveyor and crier, who had died three years before worth by appraisal £610—equivalent certainly to fifteen or twenty thousand dollars now, and in a rural village. She had three daughters, the eldest sixteen. A jury of the court of assistants convicted her; she appealed to the general court, May term, 1670, which heard the case without a jury and acquitted her, but compelled her to pay the costs, and advised her to leave the town for her own safety and the neighbor's content. As the court knew the local circumstances, we may infer that it thought she had herself to thank for much of the trouble, in what way we cannot guess. She went to Westchester, N. Y., but its inhabitants attempted to send her back; after three years' harrying, however, an accusation before the new

Dutch governor (Colve) failed ignominiously, and she was thereafter left unmolested.

In 1683 the house of Nicholas Desborough in Hartford was pelted with stones and clods by invisible hands, and a fire set without much harm, till Desborough returned some goods belonging to a neighbor, when the supernatural manifestations ceased.

When the Salem craze spread over New England in 1692, one spot in Connecticut shared it deeply; that actual bloodshed was averted testifies to the general broadening which upheld the magistrates in not carrying out sentences. That spot was Fairfield, an instance of the persistent localization of feeling which shows that each community has its separate moral physiognomy. Perhaps it shows too that the feuds of forty years before were still smouldering; for we find our old friend Mrs. Staples, who must by this time have become an expert (there can hardly have been two witches of the name, unless she had trained a daughter-in-law in her own craft), among the accused and imprisoned. The Connecticut general court ordered a special court held in Fairfield, which assembled in September (14 or 19), composed of the leading men of the colony—including Governor Treat, Deputy-Governor William Jones (Eaton's son-in-law), and Secretary John Allyn—and a grand and petty jury. To be fully prepared with evidence, the townspeople had put two suspects, Mercy Disborough and Elizabeth Clawson, to the water ordeal; both "swam like a cork," we are required to believe, though the crowd tried to push at least Mrs. Disborough under. The two, with some two hundred witnesses, were examined. The jury disagreed, and the court met again on October 28 for final decision. More evidence was taken, including the examination of the prisoners' bodies for witch-marks by a committee of women. Their report is not quotable with decency: evidently none of the committee had grown old and flabby or would admit the fact if so; each should have been at least

seventy. The jury were required to find a verdict; they evidently attached no weight to the ordeal or the "witchmarks," for they found all but Mercy Disborough not guilty, and convicted her. They were sent out to reconsider the verdict, but repeated it. The governor, for the judges, then pronounced the death sentence; but (probably at the suggestion of the members of the court) a memorial to the general assembly for her pardon was drawn up. Although there is no record of formal action she was doubtless quietly released, as she (or her double) was alive fifteen years later.

An unexplained sporadic case occurred in Fairfield shortly after this. On November 15 one Hugh Crosher ("Crocia") was indicted for witchcraft; but on May 8, 1693, the grand jury threw it out, endorsing "Ignoramus" (we know nothing of it) on the bill.

One more indictment, in 1697, probably closes the list of Connecticut's witchcraft prosecutions, though it was not the last appearance of the crime for the court's cognizance. This was in Wallingford, where "Winnifrett Denham, Sr.," and the same Jr. (a girl of twelve or thirteen), were indicted for the old common-form acts, and for "misteriously hurting the Bodies and Goods of . . . Jno. Moss, Jr., Joseph Roys, and Ebenezer Clark, with divers others." They were searched for witch-teats, subjected to the water ordeal, and excommunicated by the ministers; what happened to them is uncertain, except that they saved their lives. Fowler's "History of Salem Witchcraft" (1765) says they were bound over to the superior court at Hartford, acquitted at the August term, 1697, again complained of, and fled to New York. Unfortunately, the superior court records from 1697 to 1701 are lost. Davis's "History of Wallingford and Meriden" says the grand jury endorsed on the bill "Ignoramus," but this may be a confusion with the case of Hugh Crosher.

From 1665 on, all the convictions had been virtually quashed by the court; it has been intimated that the court's

will to do so earlier was probably as good as that of the New Haven body. There is no further evidence of any active measures to suppress witchcraft in Connecticut, or I believe in New England: the so-called Age of Queen Anne, indeed, was already at hand in England, and its spirit probably felt even in New England, and it was not a spirit of zeal. But one more case brought the general merits of the witchcraft theory before the courts, as late as 1724. One Sarah Spencer had removed from East Haddam to Colchester, carrying with her the repute of a witch. She suffered so much annoyance from it that her minister, Rev. John Bulkley, gave her a certificate for "good religion and virtue." But on revisiting Haddam, one Elizabeth Ackley cried on Mrs. Spencer for "pinching and riding" her, and the husband, James Ackley, threatened her if she came that way again. Mrs. Spencer sued them for £500 damages in the county court, and received £5 with costs. The defendants appealed to the superior court, which gave the case to a jury, who awarded Mrs. Spencer one shilling damages, and said they found the defendants not insane—wherefore we may infer that they were a poor old half-crazy couple not thought capable of harming any one.

In other American colonies considering themselves entitled to throw stones at the Puritans, and liberally availing themselves of the privilege, the superstition as an active force survived much later than in New England: the water ordeal was practiced in Virginia in 1712. And what Hutchinson said late in the eighteenth century has never been contradicted, that "more have been put to death in a single county in England in a short space of time, than have suffered in all New England from the first settlement to this time." The chief distinction of New England from old England in this matter, in fact, is that its rural population were so soon, so far, and so universally emancipated from the sway of the superstition; that its own historians have so unflinchingly dragged the facts to light; and that the revolt of its sons

against the system of their ancestors has led them to welcome and themselves exaggerate every charge against the latter, to deny them the commonest justice of pleading, and to judge them by a standard imposed on no other people in history. Furthermore, the history of an English county is only ranked as local antiquities, sunk out of sight in the larger issues of English history; while the Puritan American commonwealths are independent entities, set on a hill for all to scrutinize their every detail of social action enveloped in a glare of light, and usually hostile light. If there are other American foundations seemingly freer from this particular delusion than New England, it will be found on examination that it was only on the surface; that the differences were not in beliefs, which were no more advanced or rational than those of the Puritans, but in the power of effective action under them; that while the New England commonwealths were relatively homogenous, in others there were different elements, neither of which had power to persecute the rest, nor was inclined to persecute itself in the presence of the others.